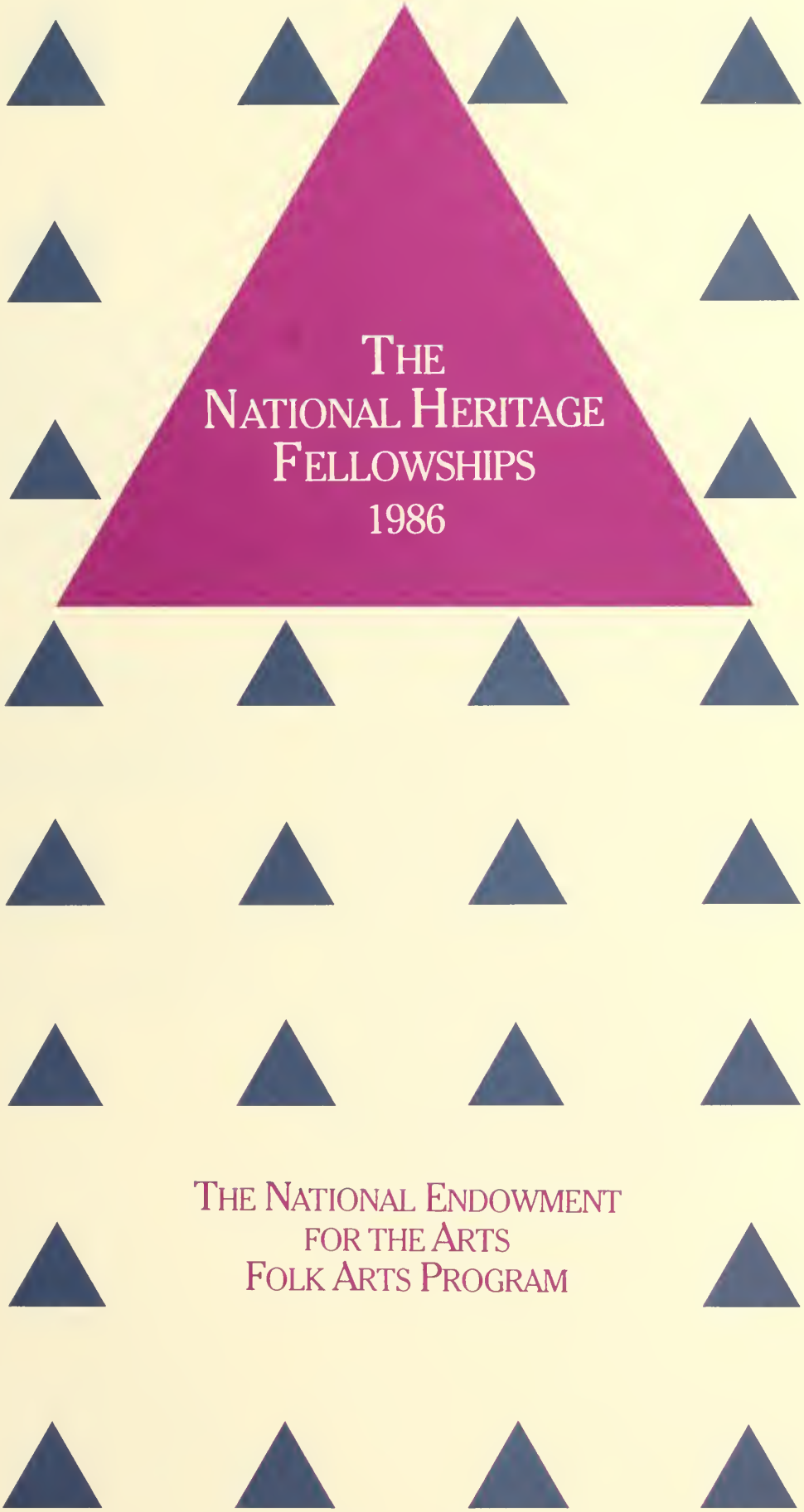
The National Heritage Fellowships 1986



The National Heritage Fellowships 1986

The National Endowment for the Arts
Folk Arts Program

The National Heritage Fellowships 1986

Since many of our most significant and influential folk and traditional artists go unrecognized by the larger community and unrepaid for their contributions to the nation and to the arts, the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts is pleased each year to receive nominations for one-time only National Heritage Fellowships for exemplary master folk artists and artisans. The criteria are authenticity, excellence, and significance within the particular artistic tradition. Persons nominated should be worthy of national recognition; they should have a record of ongoing artistic accomplishment and must be actively participating in their art form.

The thirteen artists whose names we are proud to present to the American public as National Heritage Fellows for the year of 1986 more then meet the foregoing characteristics. Their accomplishments have been attested to by many experts in their own fields, their work has been scrutinized with care by the advisory panel of the Folk Arts Program and reviewed by the National Council on the Arts. They hail from ten states, three of which—Indiana, Kansas and Oklahoma—have not been represented by earlier Fellowship recipients. They exemplify the height of skill in artistic activities as familiar and widely-loved as playing blues guitar or whittling, and as rare and particular as weaving the Tlingit Alaskan blanket out of cedar bark and goat hair or playing the Comanche courting flute.

We salute our folk artists and the depth and range of the human experience and human inventiveness that is expressed by their work. Each one exemplifies a particular tradition and skill and artistic message that we are proud to bring to the attention of the nation. We welcome the thirteen artists whose lives you will see sketched in the following pages to the honorable company of National Heritage Fellows. Together their names grace a shining page in the American story.

Frank Hodsoll

Frank Hodsoll
Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts

Bess Lomax Hawes

Bess Lomax Hawes
Program Director
Folk Arts Program
National Endowment for the Arts

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This ceremony and related activities have been planned with the assistance of the National Council for the Traditional Arts (N.C.T.A.), a private non-profit corporation founded in 1933, dedicated to the presentation and documentation of folk and traditional arts in the United States. The National Endowment for the Arts would like to thank the N.C.T.A., the Joseph Martinson Memorial Fund, the George Washington University Folklife Association and WETA-FM for their assistance in the presentation of these fellowships.

National Heritage Fellowships are open to exemplary master folk artists and artisans who are nominated by one or more citizens for the one-time-only awards. For information about nominating a folk artist or artisan for a fellowship, write:

National Heritage Fellowships
Folk Arts Program
The National Endowment for the Arts
1100 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20506

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Alphonse (Bois Sec) Ardoin

Alphonse Ardoin, his sons, and longtime friend Canray Fontenot, have been making music together for nearly forty years. Ardoin, who lives near Bayou Duralde, Louisiana, in a spot settled by his great-great-grandfather, got his nickname "Bois Sec" (Dry Wood) as a child because it is said that he was always the first to the barn when a rainstorm interrupted work in the fields. Bois Sec's first cousin was Amede Ardoin, known as the first black Frenchman to make 78 rpm recordings in the 1930s.

Maintaining the family tradition, Bois Sec in his youth borrowed an accordion from his brother and began to play. He would often join Amede at dance parties, playing the triangle near the rear of the bandstand, but watching his renowned cousin's every move on the accordion. Finally he was able to purchase his own instrument: "I bought one from one of my cousins. I paid three dollars for it. Boy, I was really proud of my accordion. I had gotten a job paying fifty cents. When I finished my first week, I had three dollars. I had a little cinnamon-colored swayback horse. I rode it about ten miles down the road to buy that first accordion."

The music he played is often called *zydeco*, and it blends Cajun, Afro-American and French Afro-Caribbean sounds and rhythms with fast tempos, frequent syncopations and blues tonalities. The button accordion, the violin and the *frottoir* (rub-board) were central instruments in early bands such as those of the Ardoin family. Younger zydeco musicians are more likely to use the piano accordion, drums, and a variety of brass or reed instruments.

Today the French music of Louisiana, both black and white, is experiencing a florescence in the popular consciousness. Yet some may forget that the pioneers of French-American cultural ambassadorship, such as Bois Sec Ardoin and Canray Fontenot, were extending the horizons of Creole roots music to such places as the Newport Folk Festival as early as 1966. Bois Sec notes that at that first festival appearance away from home, he and his musicians walked so close behind their guide throughout the festival that they wore down the backs of his shoes. Since then Bois Sec and his family have performed French-American music throughout the United States, Canada and Europe and it could be said that the world has expended considerable shoe leather beating a path to their cultural door.

Earnest Bennett

A generation ago, the gift of a pocket knife to a youngster was a proud symbol of maturation, a public recognition that the child was both "old enough to handle it" and—even more significantly—"old enough to need it." Learning the use of knife (as well as that other critical tool, the needle) were hallmarks in becoming grown up, and lucky was the child who had a master artisan like Earnest Bennett to take him through the stages of whittle stick, peach pit basket, black walnut ring, to the astonishing feat of the moveable chain carved from a single piece of wood.

Earnest Bennett began carving toys for himself and his brother when he was six years old. After seeing older men in his hill country home region of Kentucky making chains out of solid pieces of wood, he decided to try his hand at his own out of red cedar. He was twelve years old when he made his first chain. Like many traditional artists, he laid aside his art work during his maturing years to return to it after retirement many years later when he began to experiment again with knife and wood, working solidly, carefully, and with great economy of line and design building upon the many traditional forms he had seen and examined as a boy.

Folklorist Simon Bronner says, "Making the wood chain and the caged ball is an ancient art and was especially popular in rural areas for it taught one to develop creativity and problem solving . . . Earnest added his own ideas and elaborations upon this base, much as his predecessors had. He made chains with snakes wrapped around them, cages with multiple balls and designs, apparently impossible tiny chains

out of matchsticks and even toothpicks, combinations of cages, chains, hooks, hearts, pliers, joints, swivels and anchors." One of his self-named "gadgets" is an astonishing miniature movable wooden pliers carved from a single piece of wood and delicately fitted into a hollowed matchstick.

Earnest Bennett clearly takes delight in the elegance and excellence of his craftsmanship. He takes equal delight in instructing others in the details of the craft; he has been honored by the Children's Museum of Indianapolis for his generous and exemplary service as a museum volunteer; he has taught vast numbers of Indiana children the essentials of his art. When an exhibit of contemporary American folk arts was being planned for overseas touring under U.S. State Department auspices, Earnest Bennett's work was recommended with these words, "His patiently wrought, wise, and sensitive art should be prominently displayed as an example of the best of American craftsmanship."

Alphonse "Bois Sec" Ardoin by Elemore Morgan Jr.

Helen Cordero

For over 2,000 years, the Pueblo people of the southwestern United States have been shaping, molding, and firing clay into useful, ceremonial and playful forms. Besides the more usual bowls and jars, figurative pottery in the form of figurines and effigy vessels has been found in all prehistoric Pueblo excavations. Eventually, for still unknown reasons, most of the Rio Grande Pueblos dropped the making of figurines with the single exception of the Pueblos at Tesuque and Cochiti where Indian traders encouraged their production as "curios." Disinterest on the part of scholars and serious collectors, however, led many to dismiss historic Pueblo figures, mistakenly, as some sort of tourist art.

Even in Cochiti Pueblo, the early 20th century saw a gradual decline of all kinds of pottery production. "For a long time," Helen Cordero says, "pottery was silent in the pueblo." In the late 1950s she and her cousin, who was already an accomplished potter, began making pottery together as an alternative to the more common leather and bead work. Mrs. Cordero maintains

Earnest Bennett by Rose Austin

Helen Cordero
by Dudley Smith

Sonia Domsch
courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society

that her bowls and pitchers never "looked right," but when her cousin suggested she "try the figures instead, it was like a flower blooming"—countless tiny birds, animals, and eventually people came to life.

One of the frequent figurine forms of ancient tradition was that of a seated female figure holding a child, the so-called "singing mother." When Helen Cordero tried her hand at this form, she "kept seeing my grandfather (Santiago Quintana). That one, he was a really good story teller and there was always lots of us grandchildren around him." When she shaped her first portrait of her grandfather, she used the traditional design, but made the figure male and placed more than a realistic number of children on him. She called him "Storyteller."

Almost immediately the Storyteller brought Mrs. Cordero to public attention. She won awards at the New Mexico State Fair and Indian Market and the Heard Museum's Annual Indian Arts and Crafts show. Her figures have been exhibited in museums across the United States and Canada, and she received the 1982 Governor's Award for Pottery. More significantly, her reinvention of a Cochiti figurative pottery tradition initiated a revolution in contemporary Pueblo ceramics comparable to that begun by Maria Martinez of San Ildefonso, a veritable explosion of creative design. In a Storyteller exhibit in Albuquerque in 1981 there were more than 200 figurines by sixty-three potters.

Helen Cordero's work remains distinctive. She says of her grandfather's portrait, which she has now made so many times, "His eyes are closed because he is thinking; his mouth is open because he is singing." From five to thirty child figures cling to him. Her Storyteller never varies in these critical dimensions and, although she has made hundreds, no two are identical.

note: The above material was taken from the writings of Dr. Barbara Babcock, University of Arizona.

Sonia Domsch

In the year 1894 in a small town on the western border of what is now Czechoslovakia, a young

Bohemian widow, Mary Dostal, gathered her three children around her and determined to better their lives by immigrating to the New World. The small family first went to a Czech settlement in Oklahoma, but, finding their prospects bleak there, they moved to Rawlins County, Kansas, settling together with Mrs. Dostal's brother on a tree claim south of Atwood in the northwestern part of the state.

Their survival came to depend upon their skill, their industry, and, ultimately, upon Mary Dostal's hand-carved wooden bobbins with which she had learned to make lace in her homeland. Mrs. Dostal and her daughter, Anna Beck, set to making lace in their new home; son Joseph sold their production in nearby Atwood. The cash they earned made the difference between starvation and survival. It takes about an hour to make an inch of handkerchief lace; Mrs. Dostal used to sell her lace for 25¢ a yard.

Sonia Domsch is a fourth generation artist in this family tradition. Sonia was born in 1934 in the home her great-grandmother built in Atwood, Kansas. When she was a little girl, she used to watch her aunt by the hour, fascinated by the singing sound of the bobbins as they were thrown from side to side of the lace-maker's pillow. She began to make lace herself at the age of four, working down just one side of a simple pattern while her aunt warmly and lovingly did the harder part and painstakingly took out and corrected her niece's mistakes. In looking at Sonia Domsch's work, one can see the significance of early exposure to a great tradition. The graceful proportions and delicate formal balance of her laces are truly breathtaking. She makes many kinds of laces now, some of her own patterning, but she still makes the original "family" pattern with which her great-grandmother made her family's way in the New World so long ago.

Mrs. Domsch's husband, Don, is a woodworker and is appreciative of his wife's skill and craftsmanship. She has inherited the original bobbins that Mary Beck brought to Kansas, but they are thin and fragile now from a century and a half's use and she brings them out only on special occasions. Don Domsch makes all his wife's bobbins by hand as well as the pillow she uses. Sonia herself, though working full-time for an electric company, devotes as much time to teaching as to her own creative work. She has taught her daughter and her grand-daughter, though only two years old, is already showing interest. She demonstrates wherever she is invited, and has taken on several apprentices through the Kansas Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program. She loves lace-making because she, like many others, considers it a fine art and because it represents her Czech heritage of which she is so rightfully proud.

Canray Fontenot

Until the invention of the self-propelled gasoline engine and the even more fateful decision to invest great quantities of public funds in creating ever-more-complex roadways, the United States, like most other countries, was made up of a series of contiguous neighborhoods, many of them marked by the abilities and talents of a few families that had chosen to settle in the same area. In the swamps and bayous of southwestern Louisiana where the exiled French Acadians met and mingled with rural black families as well as the several indigenous American Indian tribes of the area, family names stand out and are frequently identified as having particular assets or characteristics. The Fontenots, for example, are Black, and they are musical.

Canray Fontenot's uncle and his father were important local musicians in Cajun country in southwestern Louisiana, both playing the button accordion, the lead instrument in the Black Creole orchestra of the period. Canray, however, born in 1918, learned to play the fiddle possibly in part because he could—and did—make his own first instrument out of an old wooden cigar box strung with wire off the screen door. And then, as he says, "I started practicing." Occasionally he visited a neighbor "to see how he tuned his fiddle. He would sound a string, and then I would try mine, but I couldn't go as high as his fiddle; every time I tried to match his pitch, I'd break a string . . . But then when he

Canray Fontenot
by Elemore Morgan Jr

would break a string, I would take the longest end. Then my fiddle sounded pretty good. And that's how I learned. It's just a matter of having music on your mind. . . ."

Mr. Fontenot continued having music on his mind throughout his life, joining forces with his longtime friend, Alphonse Ardoin (Bois Sec), to make up a dance band, the Duralde Ramblers, that played the southwestern prairies around Mamou, the accepted "capital" of Cajun country. His fiddle technique is legendary, his knowledge of the Black Creole repertoire is masterful; his loose Caribbean style bow arm the despair of imitators. He has added a new form to the tradition—his self-titled "blues-waltzes," combining blues tonalities, jazz improvisation and Cajun modal scales into a music all his own. All his life he has worked the cane fields and share-cropped; musical star though he is, he remains a country man—modest, optimistic, enduring—and he keeps music on his mind. The intensity of that focus is so great that it overcame humble circumstances and has put his music on the mind of many others.

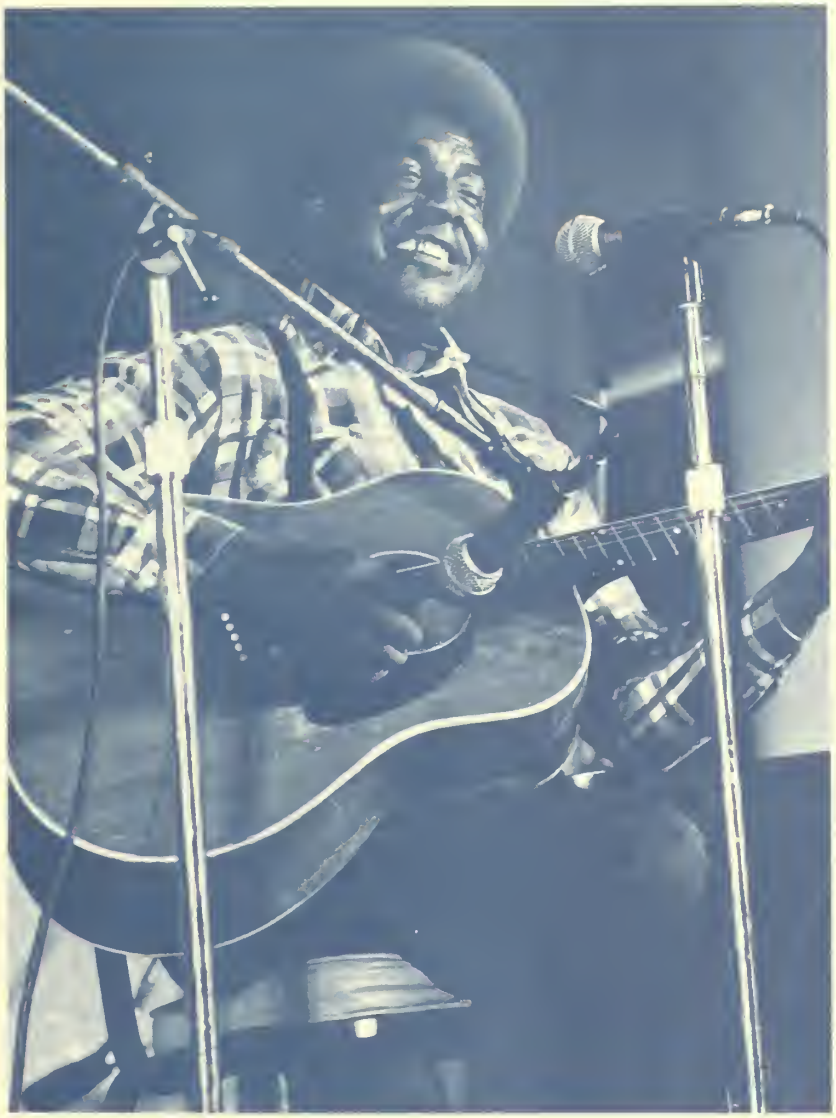
JOHN JACKSON

John Jackson was born in 1924 in Rappahannock County, Virginia. His father was a tenant farmer on what had been an old plantation prior to the Civil War. Mr. Jackson and his thirteen brothers and sisters grew up helping out with the farming, cutting timber, herding cows, setting their hands to the myriad tasks that needed to be done to support a family of this size. He stayed there until he was twenty-five years old and had a wife and young family of his own when he moved to Fairfax to work on another farm, supplementing his income with occasional jobs chopping and hauling firewood, and digging graves. A competent and strong man, he continues to turn his hand to the tasks of life and now supports his family entirely on such odd jobs to which he has in recent years added the playing of music.

John Jackson was brought up in a musical way in a musical community by musical people. His father and mother both played and sang as did most of the people in the rural Black region in which they lived. Dances, house parties, church meetings and field work were all situations in which music could be heard, and John Jackson's family took active part in all of them. He began to play on his father's flat-top $4.98 guitar at the age of four. No one showed him how; he just watched and figured it out for himself. When he was five or six years old, his father bought a second-hand Victrola. The man who sold the Victrola also came around house-to-house in a horse and buggy selling phonograph records. John's father bought most of the blues and country records of the day, and the repertoires and voices of Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, Blind Boy Fuller and Jimmie Rodgers filled their home.

Mr. Jackson was "discovered" in 1962 by folklorist Charles Perdue; since their accidental meeting in an Amoco station in Fairfax where he was sitting strumming his guitar, John Jackson has recorded five albums and toured the world from London to Sri Lanka. A quiet strong gentle man, who gave up hunting years ago because he couldn't bear to kill things, he still sings the

eclectic repertoire of his growing up: country dance music learned from Jimmie Rodgers and Ernest Tubb records, hymns, and the great recorded blues of the early twenties—a pungent combination of blues, gospel, ragtime, and country music that is often called the "Piedmont" style. He is also one of the very few living bluesmen who can play blues on the banjo. Joe Wilson has commented of him, "He comes from a place and a time when, if you needed good entertainment, you had to make it yourself because you couldn't make it any other way. John makes music the way his wife, Cora Lee, makes pickles—realizing that what they make is much better than what you could buy."



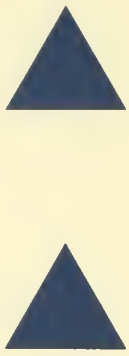
John Jackson
by Carl Fleischhauer

Valerio Longoria

Valerio Longoria's father gave him a button accordion at age 7, a gift that has had a profound effect upon the development of Texas-Mexican music. Valerio quickly taught himself to play and was soon performing for family and neighborhood parties and then for public dances. Valerio's formative years as a musician in the 1930s were exciting times, as a new, distinctive *tejano* music emerged with the button accordion at its center. Also at the center were accordionists now recognized as the "fathers" of *conjunto* or *norteño* music, including Narciso Martínez, known as the "Hurricane of the Valley" and Pedro Ayala, the "Monarch of the Accordion." Valerio Longoria would later join their ranks as "the great innovator" and "the genius" of conjunto music.

In 1942 at age 18 Longoria enlisted in the army and put his accordion aside until 1946, when he resettled in San Antonio and formed his own conjunto (ensemble) comprised of accordion, guitar, stand-up bass and drum set. In 1947 he made his first record, "Cielito," a *polca*, and "Jesús Cadena," a *corrido* for Corona Records. He became well known in the late 40s and the 50s with such songs as "El Rosalito," "Padecer Es mi Destino," and "Mi Recompensa;" many of his recordings were his own compositions. By this time Valerio had perfected a unique style of playing that would set him apart from all other

Valerio Longoria
by Al Rendon



accordionists of his time. He, more than any other, paved the way for a metamorphosis of conjunto music.

Valerio set many "firsts" that since have become standard—the first accordionist to combine singing and instrumental abilities, the first to tune and alter the accordion's metal reeds to give it its new characteristic hoarse sound and to allow for the immediate transition to keys other than the original, the first to introduce the modern dance band drums into the conjunto, the first conjunto musician to record the slow-paced *bolero* and perform it on a regular basis, and the leader of the first group to popularize the *canción corrida*, a type of song sung in polca time.

Valerio Longoria has over 150 recordings to his credit and in 1982 was among the first inductees into the Conjunto Music Hall of Fame in San Antonio, honored for his profound contributions to the development and advancement of conjunto music. He continues to perform regularly, accompanied by his son, *bajo sexto* guitar player, Valerio Longoria, Jr.

Now, 55 years after eagerly accepting his father's gift, Valerio Longoria is passing his talents to the many students in San Antonio who study with him. Through teaching, he is contributing in yet another way to the continued vigor and well-being of this unique form of Mexican-American musical expression.

Doc Tate Nevaquaya

The American Indian courting flute is an end-blown flute generally made of wood and constructed with a moveable block through which the intonation of the instrument can be changed. Archaeological evidence suggests that it once was found throughout the Americas, and in the northern hemisphere among the southwestern, eastern plains, plateau and woodland tribes. It is one of the few Native American instruments reserved for solo performance. Traditionally it is played only by men in contexts of courtship, love magic, or fertility rituals.

Around the turn of the century, the traditional role of the courting flute began to wane, and, although a few individuals continued to make and play it, flute music was rarely heard outside the home or an occasional powwow. Around fifteen years ago, however, a few Indian musicians began to explore the flute tradition and bring it to wider public attention. Doc Tate Nevaquaya was one of the leaders of this revival, himself researching construction and playing techniques, learning and repopularizing the old repertoires, and elaborating upon the characteristic ornamental instrumental graces. He even developed two new compositional styles, one of which he calls "a modern courting song style" and the other of which is a creative mode through which an individual musician can improvise while still remaining within the aesthetic boundaries of Plains musical style.

Students of American Indian music feel that although the courting flute was once widespread, it was the northern and southern plains tribes that raised it to the status of an art form. It is then understandable that Doc Tate Nevaquaya, a full-blooded Comanche, should have taken such a strong lead in the revival of this lovely tender music. Mr. Nevaquaya was born in the grassy well-watered prairie lands that roll southwest towards the Texas border from Oklahoma City, lands over which his forefathers roamed in search of game. Today he still lives a few miles from his birthplace where he is widely recognized as an accomplished easel painter, whose magnificent oil paintings on Indian subjects adorn museums and galleries throughout the state. His most original contribution to the arts, however, may well prove to be his extensive research into and his mastery of the delicate and expressive music of his people—the American Indian courting flute.

Mr. Nevaquaya has appeared at the Kennedy Center and at the Smithsonian Institution as well as in concerts and lectures throughout Europe and the Far East. He has released two important recordings: *"Indian Flute Songs from Comanche Land"* and *"Comanche Flute Music."* In addition to his performances and appearances, he has extended himself to assist younger musicians, including an apprentice sponsored by the Folk Arts Program.

Luis Ortega

Western leather workers and saddle makers, proud of their own skills and not given in any way to large-scale compliments, say that Luis Ortega is the best rawhide braider alive in the world today and quite possibly the best rawhide braider there ever was.

Señor Ortega's people came to the United States from Spain; Jose Francisco de Ortega being credited with discovering San Francisco Bay by land in 1769. Luis Ortega is of the fifth generation of California Ortegas, and he grew up on the Spade S Ranch (now the site of Vandenberg Air Base) where his father took his young family in 1905. The young Ortega was eight at that time and all of his short life he had wanted to be a cowboy. He had plenty of opportunity to learn on the Spade S, but his most significant experience came when he became friends with a 110-year-old Tulare Indian ranch hand who took the youngster on, teaching him many things, but most importantly, sharing with him his vast experience in leather work, at that time and to some extent still, an essential part of the rancher's skills. He taught Luis the basics: how to select hides, how to divide them up properly, how to tan, to bleach, to make buckskin, the rudiments of saddlery.

Years later, as a grown-up buckaroo working on ranches from Arizona to Oregon, Sr. Ortega turned to rawhide work as a hobby, especially the skill of braiding, making the reatas, ropes, hackamores, headstalls, and bridles essential to the trade. He finally got so he could braid a twenty-four strand pair of reins, a skill he reports is "hard on the eyes and the disposition—when I start I have no time to answer questions or hold a conversation with anyone." In the 1930s, partly at the instigation of a Santa Barbara artist, Edward Borein who volunteered to help him sell his work, Sr. Ortega gave up cowboying and set up Ortega's Rawhide Shop in Santa Barbara, later moving to Walnut Creek and finally to Cottonwood. There he began doing "fancy" work, there he invented the dyeing of rawhide, allowing him to introduce color to his braiding without using tanned leather. He had promised

Doc Tate Nevaquaya
by Paul Bearce

Luis Ortega
by Jill Scopinich

Khatna Peou
by Chester Hodges

himself when he gave up his cowboying that he would "get so high up in the rawhide game that nobody would ever catch up." He clearly succeeded; the extraordinary precision, delicacy and keenness of his work makes it instantly recognizable; an Ortega piece is the proud possession of many western collectors and his work is displayed in museums across the western states, including twenty-four pieces in the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

In his later years, Luis Ortega turned to writing as well as braiding; he has produced two books of his reminiscences of early ranch days and numerous articles that have appeared in such periodicals as the "Quarter Horse Journal"and the "Western Horseman." But it is his braiding work that is his singular achievement. He has set the ultimate standards, made an art of ancient craft, while remaining utterly faithful to the aesthetics of working tools. Every piece of his work is totally usable, it's just that no one would want to use something of such beauty and refinement for everyday. This is the achievement that every artist hopes for—beauty transcending utility.

KHATNA PEOU

Over 1,200 years old, Khmer dance flourished in the 12th century during the height of the Angkor Empire in Cambodia. Although its origins are from India and Java, the Khmers developed a unique dance style that has become a focal point of Cambodian culture and a source for most Southeast Asian dance forms.

The dance was eclipsed in Cambodia for several hundred years until its revival by the Royal Court in the nineteenth century. The palace supported the training of hundreds of dancers for performances in Cambodia and around the world. Khatna Peou traveled with the troupe on several of their world tours including their final trip to the United States in 1971. Upon their return home, chaos had begun to spread throughout the country and the destruction of one of the world's great cultural treasures was imminent.

Khatna Peou was born in Phnom Penh in 1915 and began her dance training at the age of

seven under the patronage of her aunt, a wife of King Norodom. She performed lead roles with the troupe until her retirement at the age of thirty when she became a choreographer, costumer and dance instructor. She continued to work in this capacity until the invasions of Cambodia and the downfall of Prince Sihanouk called a halt to the troupe's activities. The Pol Pot regime which took over Cambodia in 1975 was the cause of the decimation of nearly 1/3 of the country's population as part of a policy that selected institutions of the "old regime" such as the Royal Ballet for destruction.

Mrs. Peou, her daughter, also a palace dancer, and her family disguised themselves as peasants to escape the fate of other dancers and urban intellectuals. They were forced out of Phnom Penh, and spent the next years working in rice paddies as members of communal work units around the country. With the invasion of the Vietnamese in 1979, more than one million war weary and weakened Cambodians fled to the border of Thailand and settled into makeshift refugee camps. Among them were Khatna Peou and a few surviving teachers and dancers of the Royal Ballet. In a few months a core group of performers pulled together an ensemble of 25 former dancers, singers, musicians and a mask maker. The very presence of a Khmer dance troupe offered a ray of hope to the ravaged survivors and thousands gathered to watch the dancers practice in the dust of the border camps. It was here that the Khmer Classical Dance Troupe was born.

In 1980 and 1981 with the help of the U.S. State Department, international refugee organizations and the National Council for the Traditional Arts, many dancers and musicians came to this country where they settled in the Silver Spring, Maryland area. With inspiring dedication and courage, they organized for a third time, improvising costumes and re-creating from memory the dances of the palace. They have since performed across the country in over 75 performances and been the subject of an award-winning film, "Dance of Tears." Throughout, the troupe has been led, inspired, disciplined and directed by Khatna Peou.

Ola Belle Reed

Ola Belle Campbell Reed's ancestors moved into the New River Valley area of western North Carolina in the 1760s. Her father, Arthur Harrison Campbell, a schoolteacher and storekeeper, was able to provide for his family of thirteen children through frugality, hard work and by maintaining a summer farm in the New River Valley. However, the Depression proved an insurmountable economic burden and the Campbell family followed many Appalachian out-migrants to northeastern Maryland where there was good farmland and jobs seemed more plentiful.

Music was an integral part of the cultural heritage of both sides of Ola Belle's family. Grandfather Alexander Campbell, a Primitive Baptist preacher, was "notorious" for playing his fiddle. Arthur Campbell played fiddle, banjo, guitar and organ and formed a string band with his brother Doc and sister Ellen. Uncle Herb Osborne sang mining songs from the coalfields of West Virginia. Ola Belle's grandmother and mother sang ballads and topical songs in the Appalachian tradition.

It is not surprising that Ola Belle Campbell also began to apply her musical skills, joining the North Carolina Ridge Runners to play old-time banjo and sing for the Appalachian migrant audiences in the Maryland-Delaware-Pennsylvania area. After her marriage to Bud Reed in 1949, she organized a band with her brother Alex called "The New River Boys." The Reeds, in addition to performing, began to sponsor musical programs at country music parks, including a park they developed, appropriately named the New River Ranch. Ola Belle and her brother were widely heard over radio stations in Maryland and Pennsylvania. In the mid-1960s, she received national exposure on WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia's widely heard and enormously popular radio station.

Ola Belle has continued to perform music with Bud and her family, including her son David. In the past decade her strong voice and melodic banjo playing have been heard at the National Folk Festival and the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, in addition to a variety

of state and regional festivals. She also has written a number of songs which speak of her Appalachian past and of her commitment to family traditions, religious values and social justice. In 1978 the University of Maryland awarded Ola Belle Reed an honorary doctorate of letters for her contributions to the arts and culture of Maryland and the United States. Her autobiographical song "I've Endured" perhaps best sums up her personal tenacity:

I've worked for the rich, I've lived with the poor; Lord, I've seen many a heartache, there'll be many more; I've lived, loved and sorrowed, been to success's door; I've endured, I've endured.

Jennie Thlunaut

1892-1986

In 1985 fifteen native Alaskan weavers assembled in Haines, Alaska to study with the last living Chilkat weaving master, Jennie Thlunaut. Mrs. Thlunaut told her assembled students, "I don't want to be stingy with this. I am giving it to you, and you will carry it on."

Mrs. Thlunaut was the oldest weaver of Chilkat robes in Alaska and on the northwest coast and, therefore, in the entire world. It is safe to say that she single-handedly had kept the tradition alive in Alaska during a period of decline in interest in native crafts and was directly or indirectly the inspiration for the growing number of weavers again taking up the art. The Chilkat blanket has mythical origins, and the art of blanket weaving was transmitted from the Tsimshian to the Tlingit Chilkat in the nineteenth century. The designs woven into the blankets—stylized animal figures similar to those found in Tlingit carving—are the crests of family or clan groups and serve as property markers and emblems. As Austin Hammond, a Tlingit elder says, "The Tlingit were not writers of books. They wove their history into their garments and they wear their history on their backs." Chilkat blankets are worn in potlatches and other ceremonies, and their long-fringed borders create a spectacular display as the dancers spin and swirl. They are made for movement; though they may seem spectacular in a museum exhibit, one must see them worn to begin to understand their aesthetic impact.

A life history of Jennie Thlunaut prepared by two historians at the University of Alaska says that she was born during the spring run of the herring in 1892. Like most Tlingit children, she spent her early childhood playing on the beach, picking berries, gathering wild celery, accompanying her parents on their cyclical expeditions to hunt and fish, and travelling with them in Tlingit war canoes to visit relatives in other communities. She was still a child when she received her first box of mountain goat hair—one of the essential components of Chilkat weaving. The mountainous Chilkat region of southeastern Alaska supports the wild mountain goats and the red cedar, the fibres of which are woven together to make the Chilkat blanket.

Mrs. Thlunaut's mother began to teach her weaving when she was ten years old. She wove all her life. In spite of the monetary compensation she could receive by selling her blankets on the open market ($10,000-$16,000 for a single blanket), she gave many of them away in the traditional manner. She kept not one of these cultural treasures for herself. Her words are a challenge: "I don't want to be stingy with this, I am giving it to you, and you will carry it on."

Nimrod Workman

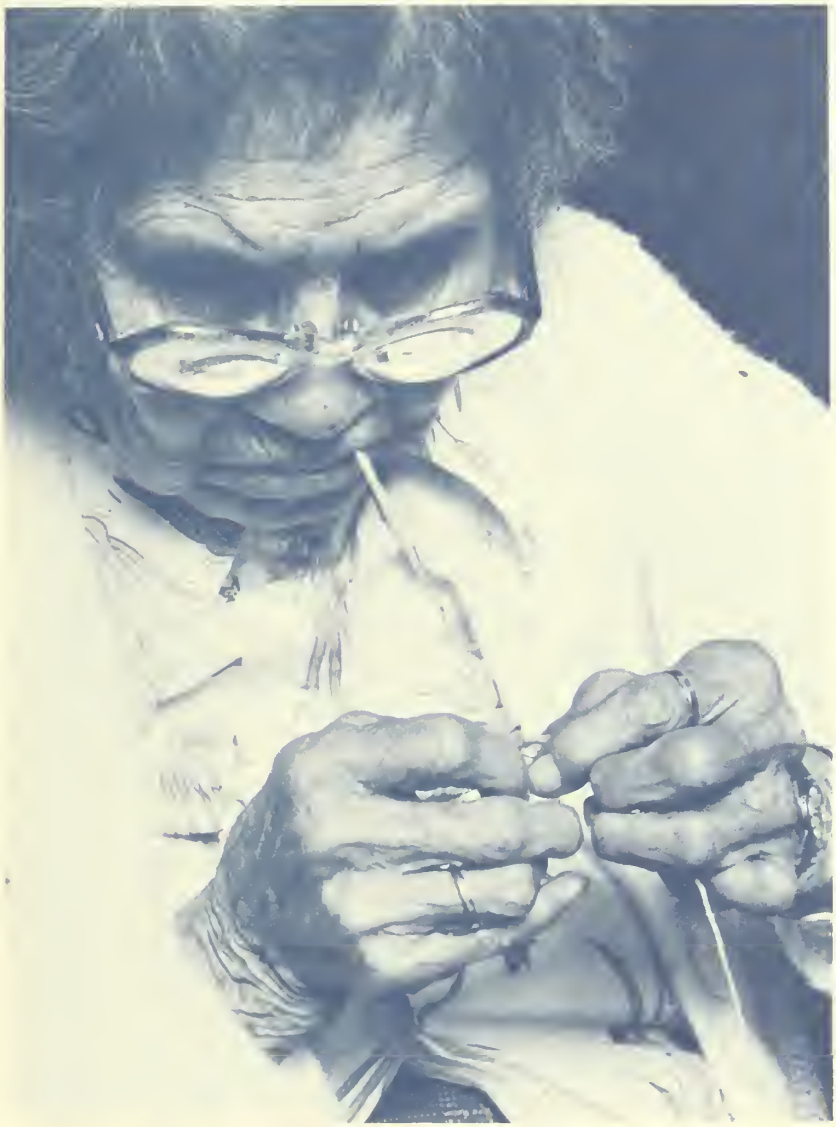
Nimrod Workman, song writer, performer and tale teller extraordinary, once remarked, "I made this song to fit my own category." His own category requires a double vision—on the one hand, it is enormous, spanning the history of Appalachia in the twentieth century; on the other, it is tiny and singular, encompassing the protean talents of this remarkable man. The young folks who run the media center, Appalshop, in Whitesburg, Kentucky, say of Nimrod, "Mention anything about the history of the southern mountains in this century; Nimrod was in the center of it."

He was born in Martin County, Kentucky in 1895 to a farming family who scratched out a living in the remote Tug River country. He was

named after his grandfather, a full-blooded Cherokee Indian, who fought in the "Rebel and Yankee War" and who taught his namesake the old ballads from Britain about lords and ladies and the ancient Scottish wars. The young Nimrod's mother sang too and his sister, Laura, played the banjo and the guitar. "My race of people," Nimrod says, "seem like they pick up music, they can learn it, seems like it's in em."

His parents signed a minor's release, and Nimrod went into the mines, the nearby Howard Collieries, at the age of fourteen. He entered the mines in 1910 and retired in 1952 with lung and back problems. His last day underground, he fainted and his fellow-workers carried him home to his wife. He received no compensation; not until 1969 was there a black lung program and not until 1971 did Nimrod Workman qualify for it. He had worked through the bitter struggles of unionization. He memorialized the events of his life in the many songs of his heritage, as well. He has himself been memorialized in two Kentucky-based projects—the Appalshop film, "Nimrod Workman: To Fit My Own Category" and his own recording, "Passing Through the Garden," produced with his daughter, Phyllis Workman Boyens, herself a fine singer.

At the age of 91, Nimrod Workman continues to tour, to sing in schools to children, to remind his listeners everywhere of the deep history of Appalachia, to reinvigorate young and old audiences with his own joyous and unconquerable spirit. We will not see his like again, but Nimrod intends that his music and his beloved songs will live on in the American ear and heart.



Jennie Thlunaut
by Larry McNeil

Nimrod Workman
by Douglas Yarrow

The National Heritage Fellowship Awardees 1982-1986

1982

Dewey Balfa
Cajun Fiddler
Basile, LA

Joe Heaney*
Irish Singer
Brooklyn, NY

Tommy Jarrell*
Appalachian Fiddler
Mt. Airy, NC

Bessie Jones*
Georgia Sea Island Singer
Brunswick, GA

George Lopez
Santos Woodcarver
Cordova, NM

Brownie McGhee
Blues Guitarist
Oakland, CA

Hugh McGraw
Shape Note Singer
Bremen, GA

Lydia Mendoza
Mexican-American Singer
Houston, TX

Bill Monroe
Bluegrass Musician
Nashville, TN

Elijah Pierce*
Carver, Painter
Columbus, OH

Adam Popovich
Tamburitza Musician
Dolton, IL

Georgeann Robinson*
Osage Ribbonworker
Bartlesville, OK

Ralf Sievers
Saddle Maker
Pendleton, OR

Philip Simmons
Ornamental Ironworker
Charleston, SC

Sanders "Sonny" Terry*
Blues Musician
Hollywood, NY

1983

Sister Mildred Barker
Shaker Singer
Poland Springs, ME

Rafael Cepeda
Bomba Musician, Dancer
Santurce, PR

Ray Hicks
Appalachian Storyteller
Banner Elk, NC

Stanley Hicks
Appalachian Musician
Storyteller
Instrument Maker
Vilas, NC

John Lee Hooker
Blues Guitarist, Singer
San Carlos, CA

Mike Manteo
Sicilian Marionettist
Staten Island, NY

Narciso Martinez
Texas-Mexican
Accordionist, Composer
San Benito, TX

Lanier Meaders
Potter
Cleveland, GA

Almeda Riddle*
Ballad Singer
Greers Ferry, AR

Simon St. Pierre
French-American Fiddler
Smyrna Mills, ME

Joe Shannon
Irish Piper
Chicago, IL

Alex Stewart*
Cooper, Woodworker
Sneedville, TN

Ada Thomas
Chitimacha Basketmaker
Charenton, LA

Lucinda Toomer
Black Quilter
Columbus, GA

Lem Ward*
Decoy Carver, Painter
Crisfield, MD

Dewey Williams
Shape Note Singer
Ozark, AL

1984

Clifton Chenier
Creole Accordionist
Lafayette, LA

Elizabeth Cotten
Black Songster, Songwriter
Syracuse, NY

Bertha Cook
Knotted Bedspread Maker
Boone, NC

Burlon Craig
Potter
Vale, NC

Joseph Cormier
Cape Breton Violinist
Waltham, MA

Albert Fahlbusch
Hammered Dulcimer
Maker, Player
Scottsbluff, NE

Janie Hunter
Black Singer, Storyteller
Johns Island, SC

Martin Mulvihill
Irish-American Fiddler
Bronx, NY

Margaret Tafoya
Santa Clara Pueblo Potter
Espanola, NM

Cleofes Vigil
Hispanic Storyteller, Singer
San Cristobal, NM

Mary Jane Manigault
Black South Carolina
Basket Maker
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Howard (Sandman) Sims
Black Tap Dancer
New York, NY

Dave Tarras
Klezmer Clarinettist
Brooklyn, NY

Emily Kau'i Zuttermeister
Hula Master
Kaneohe, HI

Genevieve Mougin
Lebanese-American
Lace Maker
Bettendorf, IA

Ralph Stanley
Appalachian Banjo
Player, Singer
Coeburn, VA

Paul Tiulana
Eskimo Maskmaker,
Dancer, Singer
Anchorage, AK

1985

Eppie Archuleta
Hispanic Weaver
San Luis Valley, CO

Jimmy Jausoro
Basque Accordionist
Boise, ID

Leif Melgaard
Norwegian Woodcarver
Minneapolis, MN

Glenn Ohrlin
Cowboy Singer, Storyteller
Illustrator
Mountain View, AR

Alice New Holy Blue Legs
Lakota Sioux Quill Artist
Grass Creek, SD

Mealii Kalama
Hawaiian Quilter
Honolulu, HI

Bua Xou Mua
Hmong Musician
Portland, OR

Henry Townsend
Blues Musician/Songwriter
St. Louis, MO

Perikles Halkias
Greek Clarinettist
New York, NY

Lily May Ledford*
Appalachian Musician
Singer
Lexington, KY

Julio Negron-Rivera
Puerto Rican Instrument
Maker
Morovis, PR

H. "Spoons" Williams*
Spoons/Bones Player, Poet
Philadelphia, PA

1986

Alphonse "Bois Sec" Ardoin
Black Creole Accordionist
Eunice, LA

Sonia Domsch
Czech-American Bobbin
Lace Maker
Atwood, KS

Peou Khatna
Cambodian Court Dancer/
Choreographer
Silver Spring, MD

Luis Ortega
Hispanic-American
Rawhide Worker
Paradise, CA

Earnest Bennett
Anglo-American Whittler
Indianapolis, IN

Canray Fontenot
Black Creole Fiddler
Welsh, LA

Valerio Longoria
Mexican-American
Accordionist
San Antonio, TX

Ola Belle Reed
Appalachian Banjo Picker/
Singer
Rising Sun, MD

Helen Cordero
Pueblo Potter
Cochiti, NM

John Jackson
Black Songster/Guitarist
Fairfax Station, VA

Joyce Doc Tate Nevaquaya
Comanche Indian Flutist
Apache, OK

Jenny Thlunaut*
Tlingit Chilkat Blanket
Weaver
Haines, AK

Nimrod Workman
Appalachian Ballad Singer
Mascot, TN/Chattaroy, WV

*(Deceased)

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY KEVIN OSBORN, RESEARCH & DESIGN ASSOCIATES, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA